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Agenda item 3

DRAFT REPORT

Rapporteur: Mrs. Sharon BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Bahamas)

Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS:

UNITED NATIONS REFORM: MEASURES AND PROPOSALS (item 2 (b))

PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999
(item 2 (a))

Section 25. Humanitarian assistance

1. At its 32nd meeting, on 14 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 25, Humanitarian assistance, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

2. Many delegations emphasized the importance of the United Nations activities in the area of humanitarian assistance as proposed for the biennium 1998-1999 under section 25. Several delegations expressed support for the proposals of the Secretary-General on refocusing the humanitarian assistance activities and reorganization of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs into the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Other delegations felt that the proposals on reorganization of the activities under section 25, and expanding the functions of the Coordinator, as proposed in paragraph 25.2, were beyond the scope of the mandate established by General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991 and therefore needed to be reviewed.

3. Many delegations stressed that the Emergency Relief Coordinator should limit his activities to implementing existing mandates and queried how he would deal with issues that fell between the gaps in existing mandates. They reiterated that providing protection for and assistance to internally displaced persons was a matter of the sovereignty and responsibility of Member States and was thus subject to the approval or request of the State concerned.

4. Many Member States noted the reference to responsibilities for advocacy of humanitarian issues with political organs mentioned in paragraph 25.2 (b). It was explained that when a body such as the Security Council was considering measures such as sanctions it was useful for attention to be drawn to their potential unintended adverse impact on disadvantaged groups. Some delegations requested the deletion of the words "notably the Security Council" in paragraph 25.2 (b) of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303).

5. Many members questioned the mandate for the reference to responsibilities for advocacy of humanitarian issues with political organs referenced in paragraph 25.2 (b). Consequently, they requested the deletion of the paragraph.

6. Many delegations questioned the process and criteria for the selection of the representative of the non-governmental organization community for participation in the works of the steering committee of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and requested detailed explanation as to the staffing of the proposed "small secretariat" for IASC.

7. Many delegations expressed reservations regarding the proposed new formula for consolidated appeals since experience showed that most pledges were not translated into payments in emergency cases, and therefore it would be difficult to include rehabilitation, reconstruction and funding of human rights field missions in the consolidated appeals. Questions were raised as to whether pledges for rehabilitation and reconstruction would be considered by the donor community as a substitute for aid to development to those affected countries. In that context, those delegations requested the deletion of the second and third sentences of the narrative related to subprogramme 2, complex emergencies.

8. Some delegations questioned the rationale of the transfer of demining activities to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations since there was no mandate for that transfer. Some delegations emphasized that this activity should remain with the Emergency Relief Coordinator in accordance with section 20.3 (f) of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.[1]

9. Some delegations expressed concern at the proposed reduction of resources under section 25. Several delegations objected to the proposal to transfer $2,309,300 to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in respect of functions to be transferred to UNDP and indicated that they believed that regular budget resources should not be used to finance those programmes.

10. Some delegations expressed the view that the acceptance of seconded personnel should be in accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/243 of 15 September 1997.

11. Some delegations stressed the importance it attached to the activities on mitigation of the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster as proposed under section 25 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 and emphasized the need to implement those activities, in particular pertaining to the strengthening of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl, in full, as proposed under that section.

12. Some delegations rejected the inclusion of appeals related to rehabilitation and reconstruction activities as well as the funding of human rights field operations, since it was clear that there was no mandate for those activities. Therefore, those delegations requested the deletion, starting with the second sentence to the end of the paragraph under subprogramme 2.

Conclusions and recommendations

13. The Committee was unable to reach agreement on conclusions and recommendations to the General Assembly.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 6 and corrigendum (A/51/6/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Corr.1).